amar chitra katha

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HARSHA

THE GREAT RULER OF THANESHWAR

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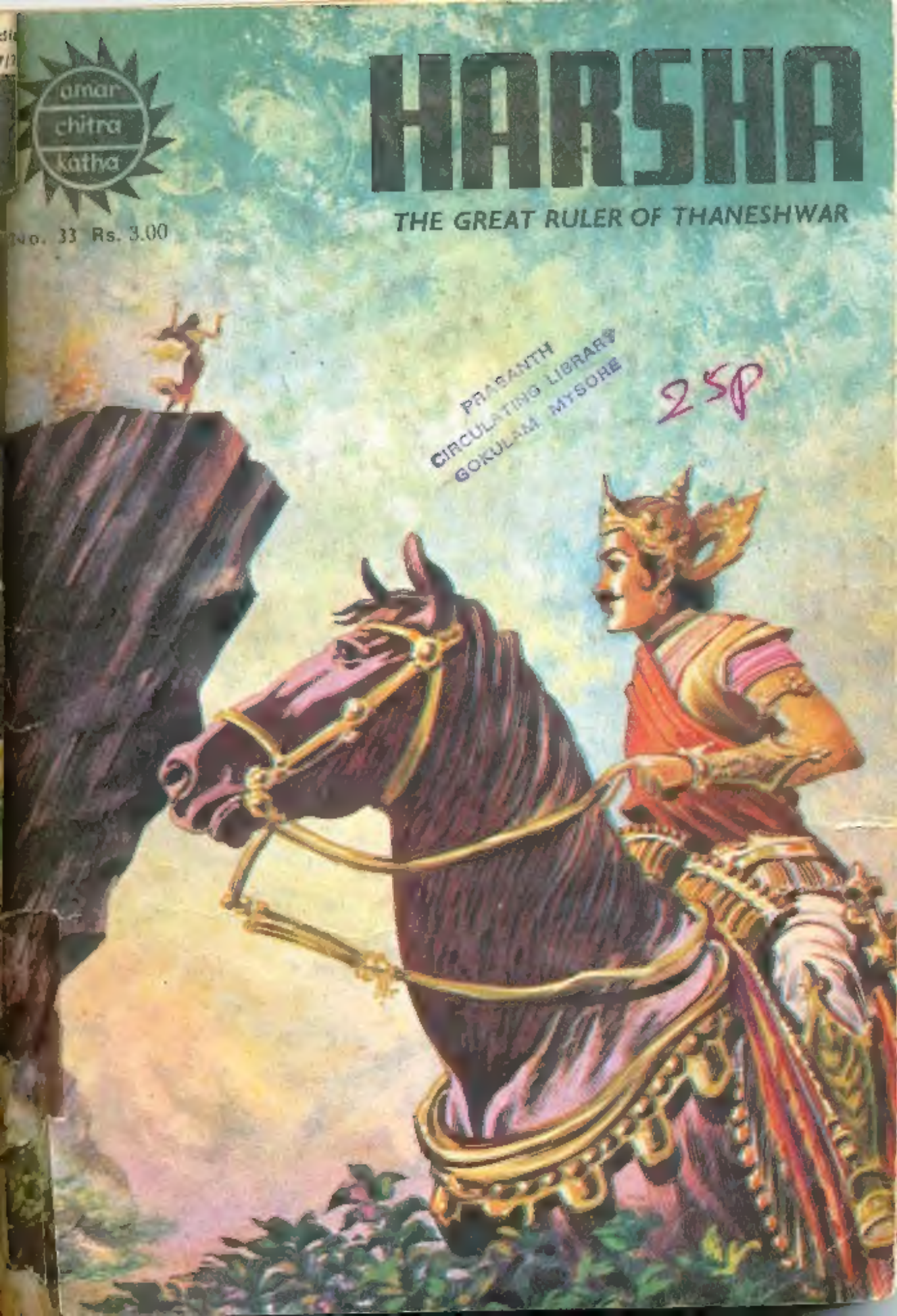

If Harsha is remembered till this day as a great ruler, it is not only because he was a brave military leader, but also because he was a man of noble impulses, a great patron of learning and letters and he had great scholars like Banabhatta, Mayura and Divakara in his court.

Harsha came to occupy the throne of Thaneshwar at a very critical moment in its history. His father had died and his elder brother had been murdered by a powerful enemy. The neighbouring kingdom, Kannauj, ruled by Harsha's brother—in—law, had been overrun. Harsha not only surmounted these difficulties, but raised the small kingdom of Thaneshwar into the most powerful kingdom in Northern India.

Banabhatta's "Harshacharita" gives a detailed account of Harsha's life till he rescues Rajyashri. We know more about the political and economic conditions of his times from the account of Hiuen Tsang, who visited India during his reign.

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ABOUT 1,400 YEARS AGO, THANESHWAR, A POWERFUL KINGDOM IN NORTHERN INDIA WAS RULED BY PRABHAKAR VARDHAN. DURING THIS PERIOD THE HUNS HAD STARTED HARASSING THE PEOPLE OF THANESHWAR. SO THE KING SENT HIS ABLE SONS TO PUNISH THEM.

AFTER A BITTER FIGHT, THE HUNS RETREATED.
VICTORY TO PRINCE RAJYAVARDHAN! VICTORY TO PRINCE HARSHA!

HALT! IT IS GETTING DARK. LET US STOP FOLLOWING THEM.
YES, BROTHER! LET US CAMP HERE.

THE HUNS DID NOT ATTACK AGAIN.
THERE HAS BEEN NO FIGHTING FOR SEVERAL DAYS. I THINK I'LL GO ON A HUNT.
ALL RIGHT, HARSHA!

WHILE HUNTING FAR-AWAY FROM THE CAMP, HARSHA SAW SOMEBODY RIDING TOWARDS HIM.
HE SEEMS TO BE IN A GREAT HURRY.
PRINCE HARSHA, YOUR FATHER IS VERY ILL. HE WANTS TO SEE YOU AND PRINCE RAJYA.
I'LL GO TO HIM. YOU INFORM MY BROTHER.
BOTH PRINCES RUSHED TO THANESHWAR, BUT THEY WERE TOO LATE.
YOUR FATHER WAS A NOBLE KING.
A FEW DAYS LATER-
PRINCE RAJYA, YOU WILL NOW HAVE TO SIT ON THE THRONE.
OH, NO! LET HARSHA BE THE KING.

RAJYASHRI, THEIR SISTER, WAS WORRIED. SHE TALKED TO HER HUSBAND GRAHAVARMAN, THE KING OF KANNAUJ.

MEANWHILE, DEVGUPTA, THE GREEDY KING OF MALWA WAS BUSY PLOTTING.

THE TIME IS RIPE. WE CAN NOW GRAB THE KINGDOMS OF THANESHWAR AND KANNAUJ.

BUT THEY ARE VERY POWERFUL, SIR.

I KNOW. BUT IF WE KILL GRAHAVARMAN, THE INEXPERIENCED RAJYAVARDHAN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DEFEND BOTH KINGDOMS.

BUT HOW ARE WE GOING TO KILL GRAHAVARMAN?

I HAVE A PLAN. DURING THE SPRING FESTIVAL, WE WILL DISGUISE OURSELVES AS SIMPLE PEASANTS AND MINGLE WITH THE COMMONERS OF KANNAUJ. WHEN GRAHAVARMAN COMES TO CELEBRATE THE FESTIVAL WITH HIS PEOPLE, WE WILL KILL HIM.

ACCORDING TO THEIR PLAN, DEVGUPTA AND HIS SOLDIERS DRESSED IN ORDINARY CLOTHES, MINGLED WITH THE PEOPLE OF KANNAUJ. THEN AS KING GRAHAVARMAN WAS ENTERING A TEMPLE—

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MEANWHILE IN MALWA-

YOU HAVE BEHAVED LIKE A COWARD.

SAY WHATEVER YOU LIKE. BUT I SHALL SOON BE THE KING OF KANNAUJ AS WELL AS THANESHWAR.

IMPRISON HER. LET HER LEARN TO RESPECT A KING.

THE SIGHTS IN THE PRISON CAST IDELO RAJYASHRI

THE PAINFUL CRIES OF OTHER [illegible] AROUSED HER [illegible]

OH, MY GOD!

WHILE RAJYASHRI WAS SUFFERING MENTALLY, DEVGUPTA WAS [illegible] HIMSELF.

JUST THEN DEVGUPTA RECEIVED A MESSAGE.

RAJYAVARDHAN IS PREPARING TO ATTACK US, SIR!

I EXPECTED THIS. GO AND CALL KING SHASHANK OF GAUD. I WANT TO TALK TO HIM.

VERY SOON DEVGUPTA WAS SCHEMING WITH SHASHANK.

I WILL SHARE HALF OF THE KINGDOMS OF THANESHWAR AND KANNAUJ WITH YOU IF YOU HELP ME.

I WILL. WHAT MUST I DO?

WIN RAJYAVARDHAN'S CONFIDENCE AND ACCOMPANY HIM IN HIS ATTACK ON ME.

WHEN THE BATTLE BEGINS, ATTACK RAJYAVARDHAN FROM THE REAR. ONCE HE IS DEAD, WE'VE AS GOOD AS WON.

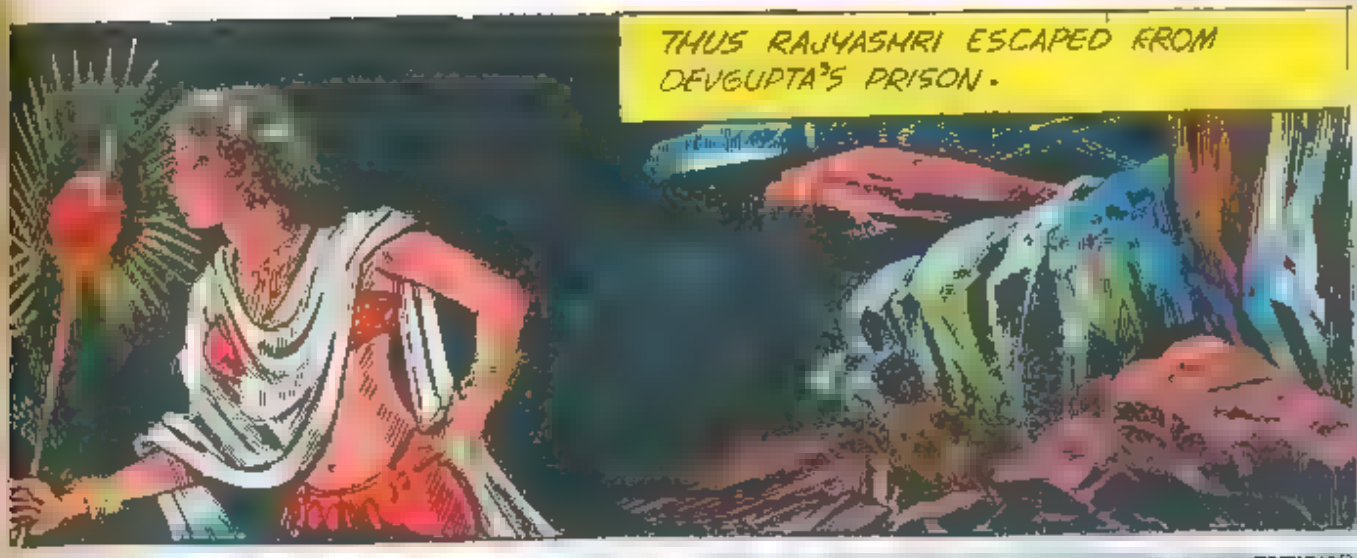
YOUR PLAN IS EXCELLENT. WE SHALL DEFINITELY SUCCEED.

SO, SHASHANK WITH HIS EVIL INTENTIONS MARCHED WITH RAJYAVARDHAN TOWARDS MALWA.

I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR YOUR HELP, KING SHASHANK. YOU SHALL ALWAYS BE MY MOST TRUSTED FRIEND.

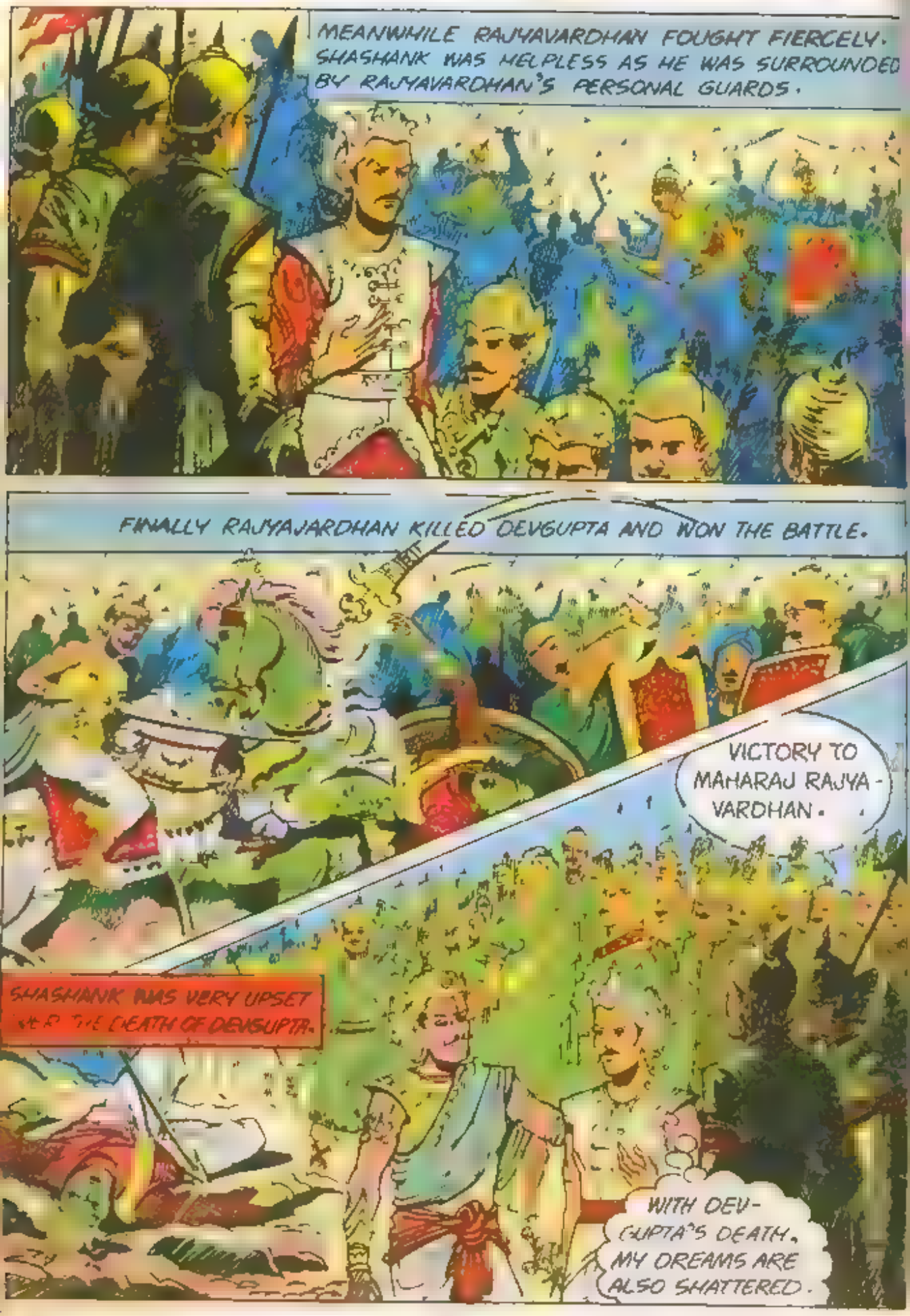
MY PERSONAL GUARDS SHALL PROTECT YOU WHILE YOU FIGHT.

BECAUSE OF THE BATTLE, EVERYTHING WAS DISORGANIZED IN DEVOLUTIA'S PRISON.
WE NEED ALL THE SOLDIERS. LEAVE ONLY ONE MAN TO GUARD THE PRISON.
TO GUARD
THIS SECRET PASSAGE WILL CARRY YOU TO THE JUNGLE.
THANK YOU. YOU ARE VERY NOBLE. PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.



DEVGUPTA'S SOLDIERS WERE PATROLLING THE JUNGLE, BUT LUCKILY SHE WAS NOT SPOTTED BY THEM.

FINALLY RAJYASHRI ESCAPED INTO THE JUNGLE.


MEANWHILE RAJYAVARDHAN FOUGHT FIERCELY. SHASHANK WAS HELPLESS AS HE WAS SURROUNDED BY RAJYAVARDHAN'S PERSONAL GUARDS.
FINALLY RAJYAJARDHAN KILLED DEVGUPTA AND WON THE BATTLE.
VICTORY TO MAHARAJ RAJYA-VARDHAN.
SHASHANK WAS VERY UPSET AFTER THE DEATH OF DEVGUPTA.
WITH DEV-GUPTA'S DEATH, MY DREAMS ARE ALSO SHATTERED.

MEANWHILE, RAJYASHRI WAS DISTURBED OVER HER FATE.
THERE IS NOBODY TO HELP ME.
WHY SHOULD I LIVE ANY MORE.
BROTHER HARSHA!
STOP! SISTER STOP!
YES. BUT STILL OTHERS WOUL CONTINUE TO SUFFER, BECAUSE OF PETTY QUARRELS BETWEEN DIFFERE KINGDOMS.
YOUR BAD DAYS ARE NOW OVER, DEAR SISTER.
PLEDG THAT I WILL UPROOT TH CAUSE OF THESE SU

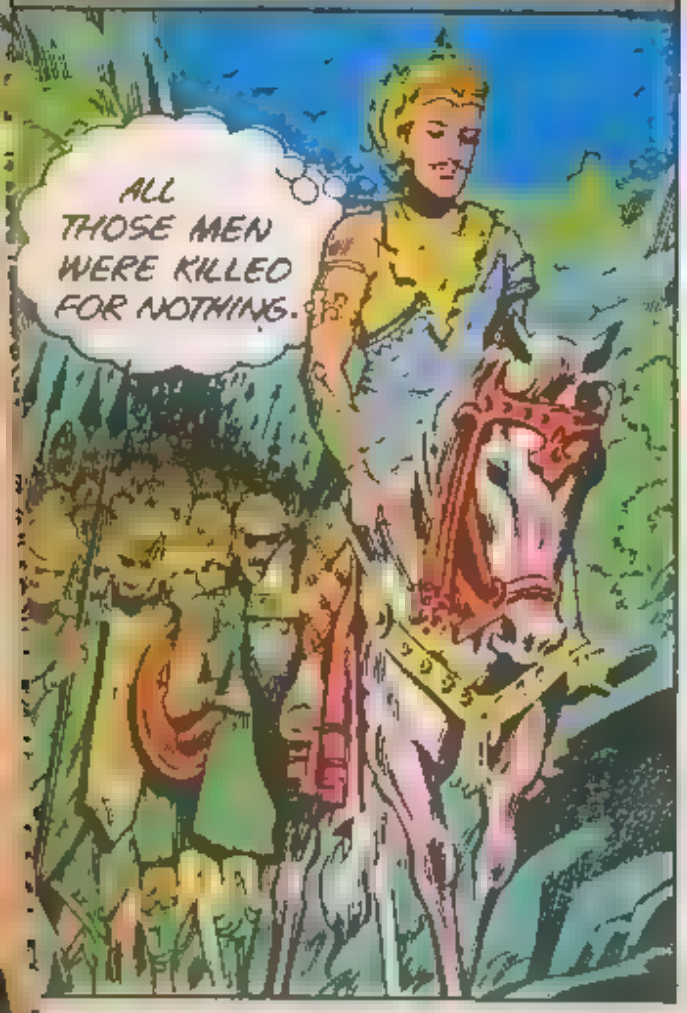
AND VERY SOON HARSHA CONQUERED THE VARIOUS SMALL KINGDOMS TO BRING LASTING PEACE IN NORTHERN INDIA.
NOW THAT ALL THE KINGDOMS HAVE COME UNDER ONE FLAG, THERE WOULD BE NO MORE BATTLES BETWEEN THEM. POOR PEASANTS WILL LIVE IN PEACE AT LAST.
UNAWARE OF HARSHA'S PEACE
THE GREAT SOUTH INDIAN KING, PULA
WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE RISING STRENGTH OF HARSHA.
MAHARAJ PULAKESHIN, HARSHA HAS WON KINGDOMS AS FAR AS KATHIAWAR. HE MAY ATTACK US ONE DAY.
WE MUST ATTACK BEFORE HE DOES.

HARSHA WAS RETURNING HOME AFTER CONQUERING KATHIAWAR. HIS SOLDIERS WERE TIRED AND EAGER TO REACH HOME.

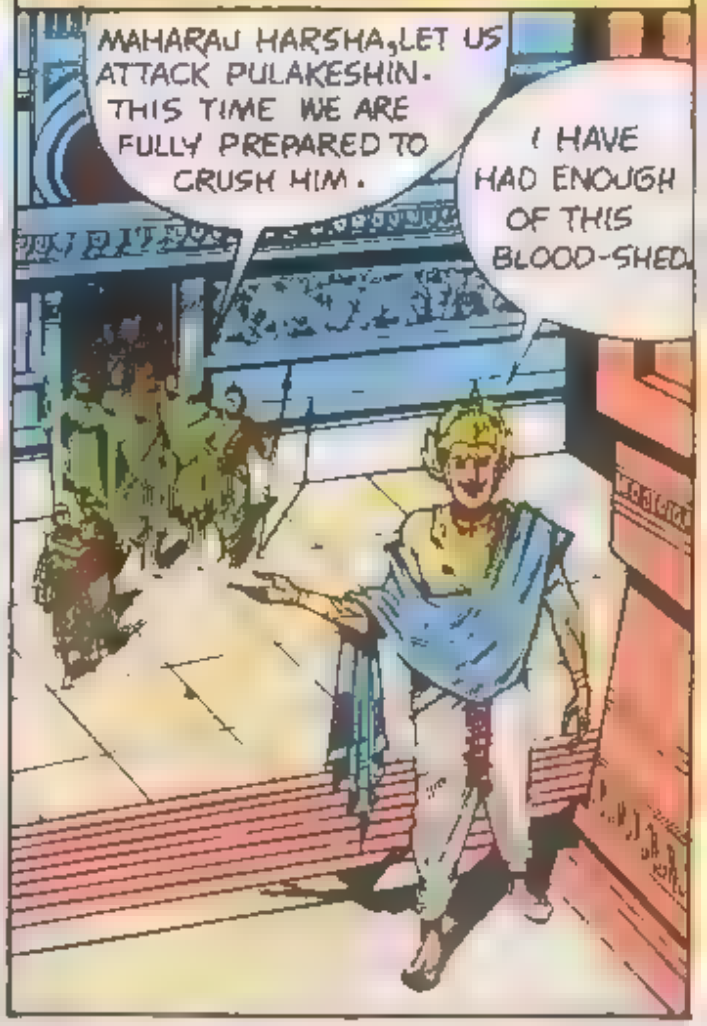
AND AT THAT MOMENT PULAKESHIN ATTACKED HARSHA.

THE FIGHTING CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS. LOSSES WERE HEAVY ON BOTH SIDES.

HARSHA'S TIRED SOLDIERS HAD TO RETREAT. HE WAS VERY SAD.



SOMETIME LATER IN THANESHWAR -



THERE SHALL BE NO MORE WARS.
IN FUTURE, I SHALL USE MY STRENGTH TO PROTECT THE WEAK AND THE POOR.
YOU ARE A NOBLE KING, MAHARAJ HARSHA.
LONG LIVE, MAHARAJ HARSHA.

TO FULFIL HIS DREAM, HARSHA GAVE FINANCIAL HELP TO THE POOR.
HE APPOINTED PHYSICIANS TO TREAT THE SICK FREE OF COST.
HE HELPED STUDENTS TO PURSUE THEIR STUDIES.
DURING HIS TIME, TRADERS CAME FROM AS FAR AS CHINA.
PEOPLE PROSPERED.
AND FOLLOWERS OF DIFFERENT FAITHS LIVED IN PEACE AND HARMONY.

DURING THIS PERIOD, HIUEN TSANG, THE FAMOUS CHINESE PILGRIM AND SCHOLAR CAME TO INDIA. AFTER SPENDING SOME TIME IN EASTERN INDIA, HE MET HARSHA.
MAHARAJ, A BUDDHIST MONK WANTS TO SEE YOU.
BRING HIM IN.
WELCOME, SCHOLAR HIUEN TSANG. WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING YOU.
MAHARAJ, I AM HONOURED.
SIR, I HAVE COME HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BUDDHIST RELIGION.
I HOPE, YOU FIND YOUR STAY COMFORTABLE
HIUEN TSANG STAYED IN INDIA FOR A FEW YEARS.

DURING HIUEN TSANG'S STAY, HARSHA DECIDED TO HOLD A SEMINAR ON RELIGIONS.

MINISTER, PLEASE INVITE SCHOLARS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS TO TAKE PART IN THIS SEMINAR.

EMINENT SCHOLARS OF HINDUISM, JAINISM AND BUDDHISM CAME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SEMINAR.

THE SEMINAR CONTINUED FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

HIUEN TSANG TOO PARTICIPATED IN THE SEMINAR.

ACHARYA HIUEN TSANG, YOU ARE THE MOST NOBLE SCHOLAR I HAVE EVER KNOWN.

BUT SOME OF THE GREEDY PARTICIPANTS DID NOT LIKE THAT A FOREIGNER SHOULD BE PRAISED BY THIER KING.

IF HIUEN TSANG MAKES A GOOD IMPRESSION ON THE KING, WE MAY NOT GET THOSE RICH REWARDS, WE EXPECT.

YES, HE MUST BE FINISHED BEFORE HE DOES MORE HARM.

BUT THIS CONSPIRACY WAS REPORTED TO HARSHA IMMEDIATELY.

I WARN THE CONSPIRATORS THAT ANYBODY WHO TRIES TO HARM ACHARYA HUEN TSANG SHALL BE PUNISHED. PROCLAIM THIS TO ALL.

I BELIEVE IN NON-VIOLENCE, THE POOR AND THE WEAK SHALL BE PROTECTED. THOSE WHO PREACH VIOLENCE SHALL PAY FOR IT WITH THEIR OWN LIVES.

AS A RESULT OF THIS STERN WARNING, NOBODY TRIED TO HARM HIUEN TSANG.

THE SEMINAR IS OVER. THE SCHOLARS SHOULD NOW BE PRESENTED WITH GIFTS.

THE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, MAHARAJ!

FROM THE NEXT DAY, HARSHA STARTED PRESENTING GIFTS TO THE SCHOLARS AND PRIESTS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS.

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS SMALL TOKEN OF MY APPRECIATION.

MAY GOD BE ALWAYS WITH YOU, KING HARSHA!

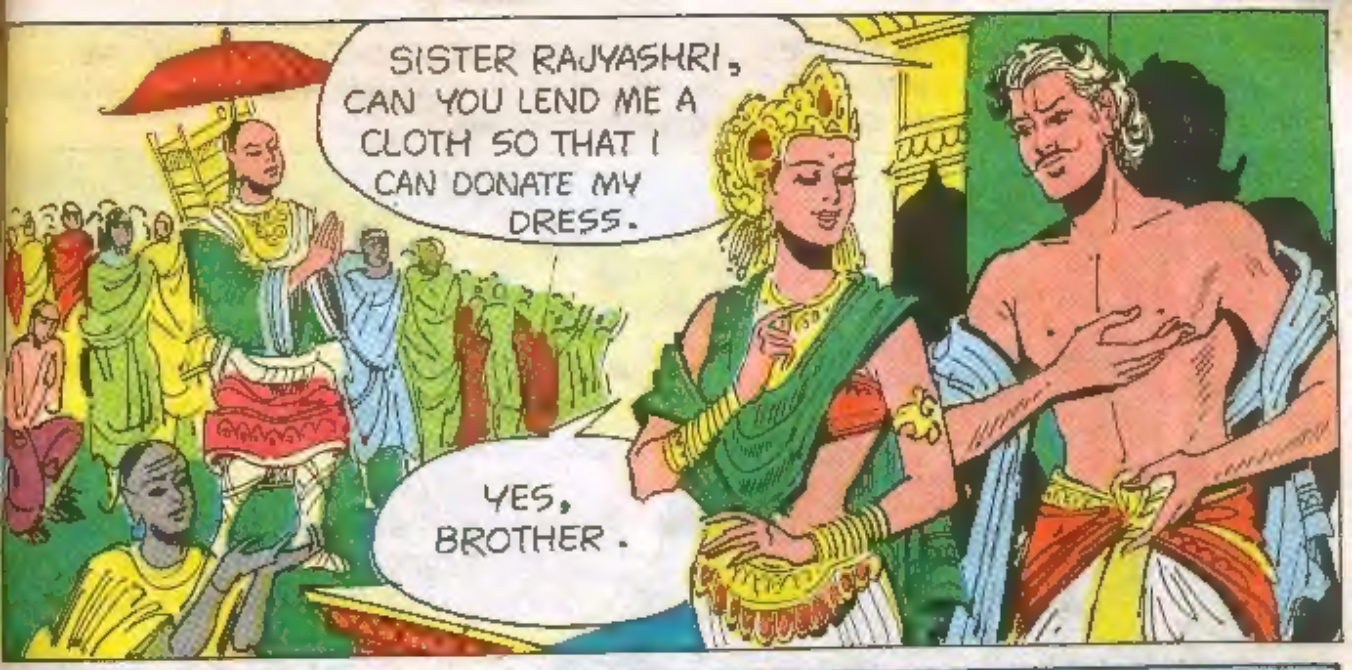
THEN CAME THE TURN OF POOR PEASANTS.

SOON THE GIFTS BROUGHT FOR DONATION WERE EXHAUSTED. BUT STILL MANY PEOPLE REMAINED WITHOUT GIFTS.
BRING ALL THE REMAINING WEALTH FROM THE ROYAL TREASURY.
AS YOU WISH, MAHARAJ.

THE ROYAL WEALTH WAS ALSO GIVEN AWAY BUT EVEN THEN SOME PEOPLE WERE LEFT OUT.

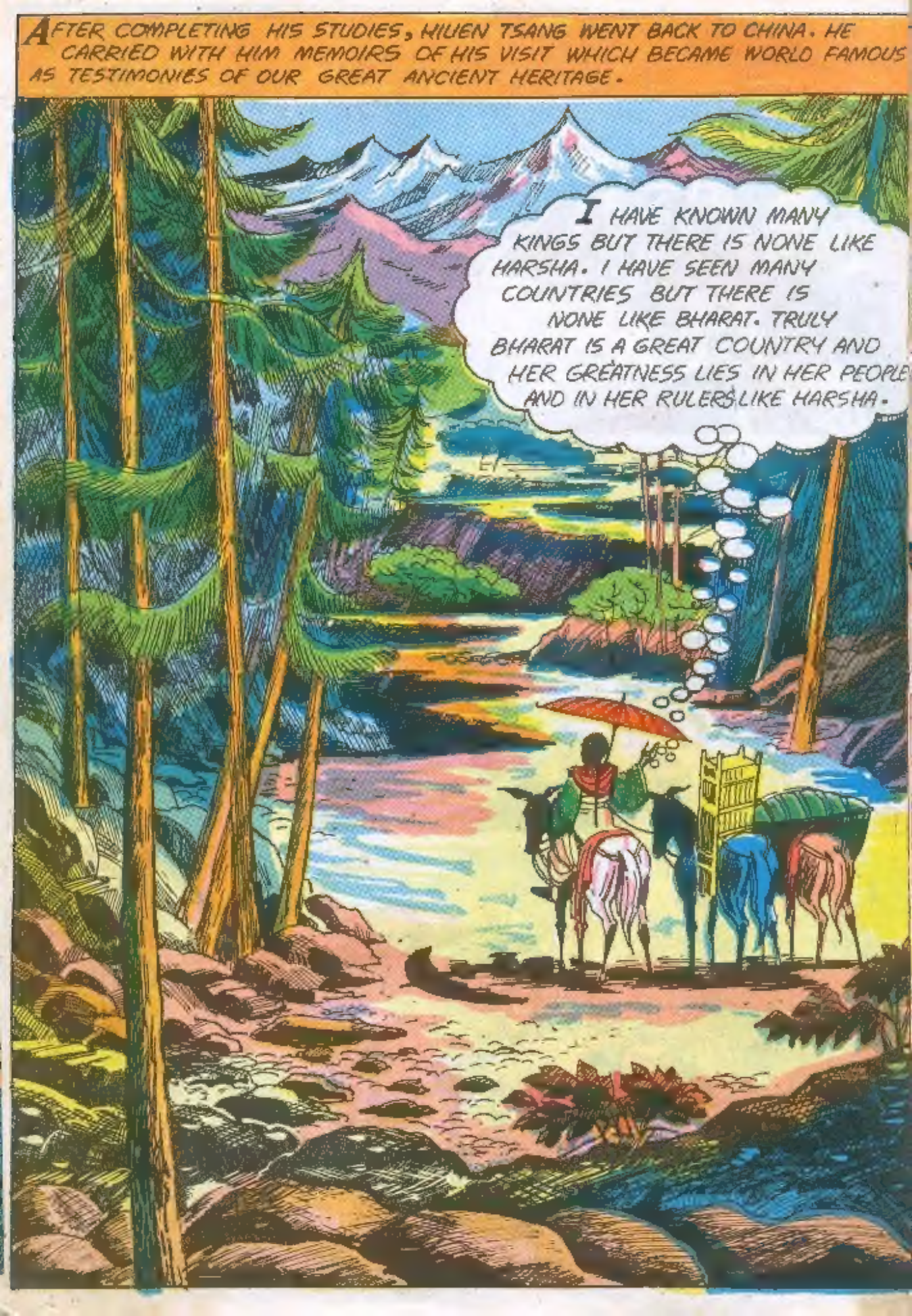
HERE TAKE MY ORNAMENTS. OF WHAT USE ARE THEY IF MY PEOPLE LIVE IN MISERY.

IN THE END ONLY ONE MAN WAS LEFT OUT.
I AM SORRY THAT NOTHING IS LEFT WITH ME EXCEPT THE CLOTHES I AM WEARING. PLEASE ACCEPT THEM.


SISTER RAJYASHRI, CAN YOU LEND ME A CLOTH SO THAT I CAN DONATE MY DRESS.
YES, BROTHER.

IN THIS MANNER, EVERY FIVE YEARS, HARSHA GAVE AWAY ALL HIS WEALTH TO THE SCHOLARS, THE PRIESTS AND THE POOR.
LONG LIVE MAHA-RAJ HARSHA.
HERE, PLEASE TAKE THESE CLOTHES.

LONG LIVE MAHA-RAJ HARSHA.


AFTER COMPLETING HIS STUDIES, HIUEN TSANG WENT BACK TO CHINA. HE CARRIED WITH HIM MEMOIRS OF HIS VISIT WHICH BECAME WORLD FAMOUS AS TESTIMONIES OF OUR GREAT ANCIENT HERITAGE.
I HAVE KNOWN MANY KINGS BUT THERE IS NONE LIKE HARSHA. I HAVE SEEN MANY COUNTRIES BUT THERE IS NONE LIKE BHARAT. TRULY BHARAT IS A GREAT COUNTRY AND HER GREATNESS LIES IN HER PEOPLE AND IN HER RULERS LIKE HARSHA.